

1619: Virginia's First Africans

Prepared by Beth Austin
Registrar & Historian
Hampton History Museum
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Introduction

In late August, 1619, around 30 enslaved Africans were brought to Virginia aboard the English privateer ship *White Lion*. At Point Comfort, they were sold to Virginia Company officials in return for supplies. A few days later, 2-3 additional enslaved Africans were traded by the ship *Treasurer*. They were the first recorded Africans in mainland English America.

The enslaved Africans brought to Virginia in 1619 were probably from the Kingdom of Ndongo in West Central Africa. They were Kimbundu-speaking people who shared a common cultural identity and brought advanced agricultural and industrial knowledge. Between 1618 and 1620, Portuguese colonizers allied with local Imbangala mercenaries to conquer Ndongo and enslave thousands of the kingdom's inhabitants.

At Luanda, Angola, the slave ship *San Juan Bautista* departed with 350 enslaved captives from Ndongo. Its destination was Vera Cruz, Mexico, but before it arrived it was attacked by the English privateer ships *White Lion* and *Treasurer*. The English ships stole around 60 of the surviving Africans and sailed for Virginia.

In 1620, there were 32 Africans living in Virginia. However, by 1625, only around 25 Africans remained. Most had arrived in 1619, but at least five Africans arrived on other ships, and two children were born to African mothers. Virginia's First Africans were probably enslaved for life, though a few eventually became free.

The landing of the first Africans is one of the most significant events in early Virginia history, and its 400th anniversary commemoration in 2019 has provided the impetus for re-examination, new research, and the opportunity for interpretation to a wider public. Until recently, relatively little was known about the identities, origins, and experiences of Virginia's first "20 and odd" Africans. In the late 1990s, historians Engel Sluiter and John K. Thornton identified the English privateer and Iberian slave ships carrying the first Africans and their likely origins in the Angola region of West Central Africa, and more recently, Martha McCartney has discovered documents confirming the arrival of additional enslaved Africans from the same Iberian slave ship. Moreover, since the 1980s, important new works on the history of slavery in the early Chesapeake have added much to our knowledge of Virginia's first Africans by placing their arrival and experiences into more clearly defined Atlantic, cultural, and legal contexts.

This report seeks to make the best and most current scholarly research on Virginia's first Africans available to the general public, beginning with their West Central African origins, journey from West Central Africa to Virginia, and identities and experiences in Virginia between 1619 and 1625. Following these narrative segments is an overview of the legal and cultural status of early Africans in Virginia.

Because of the paucity of extant primary source material, and a long and wide-ranging body of historiography on the wider context of their arrival and experiences, the story of Virginia's First Africans has taken many forms. In addition to offering a comprehensive overview of current scholarly research and consensus, this report also compares popular and traditional narratives relating the story of the first Africans with available source material, seeking to parse those aspects of the narrative that can be confirmed in extant primary source material without invalidating histories supplemented by local and family traditions.

West Central Africa: The Kingdom of Ndongo

The Africans brought to Virginia in 1619 were probably captured in the Kingdom of Ndongo, in the Angola region of West Central Africa. The kingdom's population was made up of Kimbundu-speaking people living in densely populated urban cities and towns surrounded by suburban farming settlements. Most residents of Ndongo possessed advanced agricultural and industrial skills.

Between 1618 and 1620, Portuguese invaders allied with Imbangala mercenaries to conquer Ndongo and enslave its residents. The Portuguese-Imbangala force attacked and destroyed Ndongo's capital city, Kabasa. Thousands of enslaved captives were taken to the Portuguese port of Luanda, where they were sent to Spanish and Portuguese colonies in America. Unlike most enslaved Africans carried to America, Virginia's First Africans probably came from a single or few closely related ethnic groups and shared a common culture and identity.

The People of Ndongo

The Kingdom of Ndongo was located on a high plateau between the Lukala and Kwanza Rivers, about 200 miles inland from the fortified Portuguese port of Luanda. The capital city, Kabasa, was its royal seat of power and had a population of up to 50,000 people. Kabasa and other urban centers were densely populated, and cities and towns were surrounded by regularly spaced agricultural settlements. Residents of cities were engaged in trade or were skilled artisans and laborers, especially producing woven cloth. The population of suburban farming communities grew crops such as sorghum and millet and raised livestock such as poultry, cattle, and goats. Many residents of Ndongo possessed both agricultural and industrial knowledge, since it was common for farm workers to produce other goods during less busy growing seasons. Central Africans, including those in Ndongo and the surrounding region, formed their identities based on local family and social networks within a larger regional political structure. The Kingdom of Ndongo consisted of local territories, ruled by *sobas*, united under the king of the Ngola dynasty.¹

Mbundu religious beliefs and practices were recorded by Jesuit missionaries attempting to covert West Central Africans to Christianity. At the core of Mbundu religion was the belief that the dead, and especially ancestors (*zumbis*), influenced people and events in the living world and could be communicated with by leaving offerings at grave sites. Moral deities, called *kilundas*, also influenced local life and were worshipped at local shrines or holy sites, called *itekes*. Theology or doctrine were decentralized, relying on an individual's or a community's interpretation and revelation rather than a centralized orthodoxy controlled by a clergy. Music and dancing were important parts of religious as well as secular life and military training, and West Central Africans had sophisticated musical traditions that used complex rhythms and included horns, stringed instruments, and marimbas and drums played with a high level of skill. Ndongo's neighbor, the Kingdom of Kongo, was allied with the Portuguese and had been heavily Christianized for over a century, and adoption of the Portuguese language and elements of Portuguese dress were common in secular settings. In contrast, before the 1620s most regions of Ndongo rejected Portuguese language, dress, and religion as part of their resistance to

Portuguese conquest, but there was a nascent growing Portuguese influence in regions of Ndongo near the border with Kongo. Portuguese culture and religion became more popular in Ndongo during the reign of Queen Njinga Mbandi, who ruled from 1624 to 1663.²

Ndongo-Portuguese Relations

The Kingdom of Ndongo was the largest and most powerful rival of the Portuguese colony of Angola. Ndongo's contact with the Portuguese began around 1518, when King Ngola Kiluanje sent ambassadors to Portugal and requested Catholic missionaries to visit Ndongo. A tentative alliance was established, though rulers of Ndongo were skeptical of strong Portuguese power and limited the influence of Catholic missionaries. In 1575, Portugal established a colony called Angola at the mouth of the Kwanza River. Its purposes were to export enslaved captives and serve as a base for Jesuit Catholic missionaries. From 1576 to 1605, the Portuguese fortified the city of São Paulo de Luanda, a large port through which thousands of captives were exported each year. In the 1580s and 1590s, Portuguese leaders based in the Angola colony attempted to conquer Ndongo by recruiting support from local sobas, and by seizing and fortifying territory along the Kwanza River inland from Luanda. Combined armies from Ndongo and Matamba, to the north, defeated a Portuguese invasion force in 1590. In 1599, Ndongo and Portugal agreed to a truce and formed a tentative alliance.³

European trade of enslaved Africans began in the 1400s and exploited an existing but quite different system of slavery practiced by Africans. European enslavement of Africans differed from African slavery in that it was race-based closely tied to individual land ownership, vastly expanded in scope and territory, and some slaves in Africa had legal rights. Europeans massively broadened the scale of the slave trade and the areas and circumstances of their capture. Before European colonization, most slaves were captured as prisoners of war or were used as a form of tribute paid to rulers consolidating their power. Europeans purchased enslaved captives from African slave traders and began exporting enslaved Africans to replace Native American laborers in Spanish and Portuguese colonies. The establishment and expansion of Portugal's colony at Angola coincided with the Iberian Union of 1580 to 1640, which united Spain and Portugal under one empire. During this period, with the bureaucracy managing the slave trade streamlined under one government, Portuguese slave traders dramatically increased their shipments of enslaved Africans from slave trading ports in West Africa and West Central Africa to Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the New World. Until 1618, Portuguese enslavers in Angola purchased captives through existing local networks of slave traders or exacted them as tribute from local sobas who had allied with the Portuguese. Some of these enslaved Africans may have come from the Kingdom of Kongo, or captured in Kongolese raids or military campaigns from regions to the east and north. Others may have come from Kimbundu-speaking areas to the south of the Portuguese colony of Angola. However, by 1618 the Portuguese set out establish its own supply of enslaved captives for export by initiating another offensive against Ndongo. Virginia's First Africans were captured more directly under Europeans' authority than most enslaved Africans.⁴

The Portuguese Invasion of 1618-1620

In 1618, Ndongo was in political crisis. The year before, Ndongo's king, Mbandi Ngola Kiluanji, was overthrown in a coup staged by a group of sobas. His son, Ngola Mbandi, had not yet secured his succession to the throne. Angola's Portuguese governor, Luís Mendes de Vasconçelos, determined to take advantage of the internal turmoil and allied with three bands of warrior mercenaries called

Imbangalas to invade Ndongo. Though the Portuguese government discouraged use of African mercenaries, the practice was commonplace. The combined Portuguese-Imbangala forces swiftly progressed through Ndongo and pressed toward the city of Kabasa. By summer 1619, Ngola Mbandi had retreated to the Kindonga Islands on the Kwanza River, and Kabasa had fallen. Manuel Bautista Soares, Bishop of Kongo, reported in 1619 that “in place of leaving off with the Jagas [Imbangalas], he [Vasconcelos] embraced them, and he has gone to war with them for two years, killing with them and capturing innumerable innocent people.” In the 1620s, Queen Njinga Mbandi, Ngola Mbandi’s sister, recovered Ndongo’s autonomy and influence by consolidating power with neighboring Matamba to the north, garnering support of some of the Imbangalas, and deftly managing diplomatic relations with the Portuguese. Queen Njinga Mbandi ruled Ndongo and Matamba from 1624 to 1663.⁵

Ndongo’s defenses included a series of fortified positions and an infantry of professional soldiers called *quimbares*, supported by militias called up from the general population in times of war. Food and supplies were provided by large baggage trains that included women and slaves. Though firearms and archers were used on both sides, most combat was hand-to-hand fighting using swords, clubs, battle axes, spears, and shields. At the beginning of the invasion, the elderly, most women, and children were ordered to take refuge in nearby islands and hilly regions while militias of men remained behind to resist the advancing Portuguese and Imbangala forces. Those who were not able to evacuate before the swiftly advancing Portuguese-Imbangala invasion were enslaved; the number of enslaved Africans captured during these campaigns was so great that they far outstripped the capacity of the port of Luanda to hold and export them, and slave ships leaving Luanda were packed far beyond their typical capacity. The *San Juan Bautista* was one of 36 ships transporting captives from Luanda to Spanish and Portuguese colonies in 1619 alone, and though the *San Juan Bautista* was licensed to carry 200 slaves as its cargo, it left Luanda with at least 350 enslaved people aboard.⁶

Because the Portuguese-Imbangala invasion had targeted urban areas, Virginia’s First Africans brought with them a combination of agricultural and industrial expertise that made their labor a significant though involuntary contribution to Virginia’s output of tobacco and other agricultural goods. The Portuguese-Imbangala capture of entire civilian communities, while absorbing older boys and killing men of military age, also meant that those enslaved in Ndongo included a disproportionate number of women and younger children. Since the *San Juan Bautista* left Luanda in late 1618 or early 1619, most of the Africans onboard were probably captured as the Portuguese-Imbangala armies advanced through the western areas of Ndongo along the border with Kongo, or in the first waves of attack on Kabasa. Residents of the areas of Ndongo bordering the Kingdom of Ndongo included some Kikongo-speaking peoples along with Ndongo Kimbundu speakers. Some sobas in this border region had been much more open to Portuguese influence than elsewhere in the kingdom, so some of the *San Juan Bautista* captives may have had more experience with Portuguese language, religion, and customs than people captured at Kabasa or other parts of Ndongo. Some historians have theorized that a “Charter Generation” of early Africans, including those brought to Virginia in 1619, were “Atlantic creoles” who combined African identity with familiarity with Christianity and European languages and culture. However, not all historians agree with this thesis; Africans with Atlantic creole identities were not typically populations who were enslaved, and Africans captured and sold to European slavers tended to be from interior or other regions with far less regular contact with Portuguese colonial influence. Instead, Central Africans taken to Virginia retained much of their African cultural identity but were much more isolated than later generations and may have voluntarily adopted English customs and religion as a means of empowering themselves in a hostile foreign environment.⁷

From Angola to Virginia

Virginia's First Africans endured a march of 200 miles from Ndongo to the Portuguese port of Luanda, where they were loaded onto the slave ship *San Juan Bautista*. The *San Juan Bautista* sailed for Vera Cruz, Mexico, with 350 enslaved Africans aboard. They endured extreme conditions during a voyage of several months on a ship packed well beyond its capacity.

Before reaching Vera Cruz, the *San Juan Bautista* was attacked by the English privateer ships *White Lion* and *Treasurer*. The two English ships stole around 60 of the surviving Africans and sailed for Virginia. The *White Lion* arrived at Point Comfort in late August, 1619, and sold 29-30 Africans for food and supplies. The *Treasurer* arrived a few days later and sold 2-3 Africans.

The Ordeal on the *San Juan Bautista*

Virginia's First Africans were taken from Luanda aboard the slave ship *San Juan Bautista* (or *São João Bautista* in Portuguese;^a *St. John the Baptist* in English). In Spanish records, the *San Juan Bautista* is identified as a 115 ton "filibote," or fluyt, a Dutch-style cargo vessel. It was designed to make voyages as profitable as possible by maximizing cargo space while operating with a minimal crew.⁸

In late 1616, the *San Juan Bautista* made preparations to sail from San Lucar in Spain, and its captain, Manuel Méndez de Acuña, obtained a license to transport enslaved Africans from Angola to Vera Cruz, Mexico. Most slave trade voyages during this period took 2-4 years to complete, and the *San Juan Bautista* probably either made stops between San Lucar and Angola or was docked in Angola for several months. The scale of the Portuguese-Imbangala conquest of Ndongo overwhelmed the port of Luanda with thousands of captives, and many slave ships took more enslaved Africans than their original licenses allowed. The *San Juan Bautista* was loaded far beyond its capacity; its license was to carry 200 enslaved people, and it sailed from Luanda with at least 350 captives on board.⁹

The experiences of enslaved people during the Middle Passage were horrific, and conditions on the *San Juan Bautista* must have been even more brutal due to extreme over-crowding. Over-packing led to a much higher mortality rate for the Africans on the ship, even while still resulting in greater profit for slave traders. Spanish records indicate that, by the time the *San Juan Bautista* arrived in Jamaica, the ship "had many sick aboard, and many had already died."¹⁰

^a Between 1580 and 1640, the Iberian crowns of Spain and Portugal were united and operated as one empire. During this period, Portuguese personal and ship names appear in imperial records in Spanish-language forms. The ship appears in Spanish as *San Juan Bautista* in records from Spain and Spanish Mexico, but the ship was probably Portuguese, since most slave ships sailing from Angola were Portuguese and not Spanish. Though there is no evidence to indicate the ship may have been Spanish, future research may reveal more about the origins of the ship and its captain, Manuel Méndez de Acuña (or Manuel Mendes da Cunha in Portuguese). The Spanish *San Juan Bautista* is used here as the more familiar version of the ship's name, and the version that appears in original records.

In 1626, Spanish friar Alonso de Sandoval published the following report of conditions aboard slave ships, based on descriptions he gathered from enslaved Africans in Spanish colonies:

They are so tightly packed, so nauseated, and so maltreated. Six are chained together with rings around their necks, and in pairs of two with shackles on their feet. They lie with one head to another's feet and are imprisoned below deck, closed off from the outside, where they do not see sun or moon. There is no Spaniard who dares to put his head through the hatch without vomiting, nor stay below for an hour without the risk of serious illness. Such is the stench, oppressive crowding, and misery of that place. And they only refuge and comfort they have is to eat every 24 hours, no more than a small bowl of cornmeal or raw millet, and with it a small cup of water, and nothing else except much beating, whipping, and cursing.¹¹

The captives aboard the *San Juan Bautista* included a disproportionate number of women and young children, and families were separated by death, sale, and the English privateer attack. Approximately 143 of the 350 captives died during the voyage, a mortality rate of 41%. Many slave ships made stops at Jamaica to sell enslaved children, who were less profitable if sold in Vera Cruz and other mainland ports. The *San Juan Bautista's* captain, Manuel Méndez de Acuña, ordered a stop in Jamaica to "refresh." There, he sold 24 children, separating them from surviving parents. The approximately 60 captives stolen by the *White Lion* and *Treasurer* in July were also probably separated from surviving family members.¹²

After the English privateer attack, the remaining 123 Africans were transferred by local authorities to the frigate *Santa Ana*, captained by Roderigo de Escobar, and arrived in Vera Cruz on August 30, 1619. Captain Manuel Méndez de Acuña declared 147 enslaved Africans as the ship's cargo; this number included the 24 children already sold in Jamaica.¹³

The *White Lion* and *Treasurer*

After being stolen and enslaved during the Portuguese invasion of Ndongo, Virginia's First Africans were stolen a second time by the English privateers who attacked the *San Juan Bautista*. The English attack took place in the Bay of Campeche, in the southern Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Vera Cruz. In July, the 160-ton English privateer ship *White Lion*, captained by John Jope, met with the 100-ton *Treasurer*, captained by Daniel Elfrith. Jope took 25 men from both ships in a pinnace, a small maneuverable boat accompanying the *White Lion*, to search for a Spanish ship to plunder. A few days later, they returned with around 60 Africans, likely the healthiest of the *San Juan Bautista* survivors. Little is known of the conditions or treatment experienced by the Africans onboard the English ships.¹⁴

The English pirates probably hoped the *San Juan Bautista* was laden with gold and silver, since each summer Spanish ships transported valuable goods to Havana for an annual convoy to Europe. The *San Juan Bautista*, a "filibote" (Dutch-style vessel), maximized cargo space and was not very maneuverable. When it left Iberia, it had a crew of 18, fewer than the 25 English privateers on the pinnace. Designed for profit but not defense, the *San Juan Bautista* was an easy target. After the attack, 123 Africans remained on the slave ship. The hull of the *San Juan Bautista* probably did not sustain much damage, since privateers typically aimed to disable and seize ships without damaging cargo. However, the masts, sails, or rudder of the ship may have been damaged badly enough to render it inoperable.¹⁵

Though the privateers probably did not plan to capture a slave ship or steal enslaved people, English mariners were familiar with the slave trade, and they considered enslaved Africans a valid commodity to steal as their prize. Privateering was a form of legally sanctioned piracy in which ships obtained authorizations to prey on the ships of enemy or rival nations. Privateering against Iberian ships was popular during Elizabeth I's reign, but King James I's 1604 Treaty of London made peace with Spain and outlawed piracy. After 1604, English privateers had to secure commissions, called letters of marque, from other European heads of state. *White Lion's* letter of marque was issued from Maurice, Count of Nassau and Stadholder of Zeeland, the location of Flushing (now Vlissingen). *Treasurer's* letter of marque came from the Duke of Savoy (now part of northeastern Italy) and was probably issued by the Duke's ambassador in London, who was known to issue marques to ship captains. These letters of marque allowed privateers to sell stolen goods – and enslaved people – in English ports. However, the fates of the Africans stolen from the *San Juan Bautista* rested on each privateer ship's legal status.¹⁶

The Landing of Virginia's First Africans

In late August^b 1619, the *White Lion* arrived at Point Comfort and sold “20 and odd” (probably 29-30) Africans to Sir George Yeardley, Virginia's Governor, and Abraham Peirse, the colony's Cape Merchant (supply officer and trade agent), in return for food and supplies. The *White Lion* did not stay long at Point Comfort, probably sailing to Jamestown before the arrival of the *Treasurer* a few days later.^c The colony's officials saw the Africans as valuable commodities and their labor as profitable; food supplies were scarce in Virginia between 1618 and 1624, and the Africans from the *White Lion* were desirable enough that the Governor and Cape Merchant parted with the Company's dwindling stores.¹⁷

Three or four days later, the *Treasurer* arrived at Point Comfort with additional enslaved Africans from the *San Juan Bautista*. The *Treasurer* did not stay long, departing quickly to avoid an ensuing scandal and potential seizure. Before departing, “two or three negroes they caste at Virginia,” and the remaining 25-27 Africans were taken to Bermuda, where a friendly governor allowed the *Treasurer* to trade.^d Among the two or three Africans sold by the *Treasurer* was Angelo, a woman who was living near Jamestown by 1624. The identities of the other 1-2 Africans from the *Treasurer* and the 29-30 from the *White Lion* remain unknown, though most of the Africans who are identified by name in later records were probably brought in 1619 on the two English privateers.¹⁸

The Virginia Colony's first census, taken in March 1620, records 32 Africans, 17 female and 15 male, all probably from the *White Lion* and *Treasurer*. None of the Africans are identified by name in this census. They are described as “Others not Christians in the Service of the English.” Here, Christian refers to ethnic identity (i.e. someone from Christendom, or in other words European) rather than religious belief or practice. Native people were listed separately.¹⁹

^b Writing five months later, John Rolfe described the landing date as “about the latter end of August.” Though the date is sometimes observed as the 20th or 25th, no other record of the arrival appears in English or Spanish records, and the date remains unknown.

^c John Pory, Secretary of the colony, entrusted a letter describing the *Treasurer's* exploits to Marmaduke Raynor, the *White Lion's* pilot. The letter is dated 30 September from James City, so the *White Lion* was in Virginia for at least a month and probably sailed to Jamestown. Carleton was ambassador to the United Provinces in the Netherlands, so the *White Lion* probably returned to Flushing.

^d Though the *Treasurer* dealt with “the inhabitants of Kicotan,” the ship was likely at Point Comfort, since the nearby civilian settlement at Kicotan did not operate as a port.

When Sir George Yeardley and Abraham Peirse purchased the Africans from the *White Lion*, they may have done so on behalf of the colony in their official capacities as Governor and Cape Merchant. Whether or not the colony became the temporary owners of the Africans before they were resold to individuals, Yeardley and Peirse retained for themselves the largest number of Africans, who in March 1620 were “in the service of several planters.” In censuses recorded in 1624 and 1625, over half the Africans remaining in Virginia were on property owned by either Yeardley or Peirse.²⁰

The *Treasurer* Scandal and the Fate of the *San Juan Bautista* Africans in Bermuda

When the *Treasurer* arrived at Point Comfort, Capt. Daniel Elfrith probably intended to sell all 29-30 Africans on board. However, the *Treasurer* was engulfed in a political and legal scandal that meant 25-29 of the Africans were taken to Bermuda rather than remain in Virginia. These Africans’ fate was profoundly affected by the *Treasurer’s* involvement in a web of piracy, illicit trade, and scandal that eventually engulfed the Virginia Company. An ensuing investigation into the *Treasurer’s* illicit activities recorded details of the attack on the *San Juan Bautista*, the attempted sale of the Africans in Virginia, and the ultimate fate of most of the Africans in Bermuda.

John Rolfe reported that the *Treasurer* departed owing to the “unfriendly dealing of the Inhabitants of Keqnoughton,” the civilian settlement adjacent to Point Comfort. The *Treasurer* had previously been welcomed in Virginia, but a change in governance shifted the political tide against the ship and its owners. *Treasurer* was formerly captained by acting Virginia governor Samuel Argall. Argall, in league with part owner Sir Robert Rich (Earl of Warwick), regularly supplied the ship at Jamestown, which acted as a base for *Treasurer* to privateer in the West Indies. *Treasurer* had a long history of piracy in the West Indies as well as dishonest dealings with other ships, and in early 1619, the Virginia Company was in the process of recalling Argall and initiating investigations of corruption and piracy.²¹

Between 1618 and 1620, a rival faction within the Virginia Company, led by Sir Edwin Sandys and Sir Thomas Wriothesley (Earl of Southampton), worked to expose Argall’s and Warwick’s illegal activities and oust them from power. In 1618, the Virginia Company dispatched Sir George Yeardley to replace Argall as governor of Virginia, investigate his allegedly illicit activities, and “send home the said Captain Argall in quality of a malefactor and to sequester all his goods there for restitution to the Company.” Argall escaped on a small ship sent speedily from England before Yeardley’s arrival in Virginia in April, 1619. By June, 1619, the Virginia Company wrote instructions to Yeardley to “give diligent order that the ship [*Treasurer*] be seized immediately upon her return, and examination taken of her course and proceeding.” It is unclear whether this letter reached Yeardley in Virginia before the *Treasurer’s* return in late August or early September, but even if not, Yeardley instructed John Rolfe and two other officials to bring the ship to Jamestown after learning of its return. When the *Treasurer* arrived at Point Comfort, Capt. Daniel Elfrith sent word to Jamestown, expecting the message to be received by Argall, but the *Treasurer* left Virginia hastily after learning of the change in the colony’s governance and political climate.²²

In addition to the investigation into Argall’s corruption and the *Treasurer’s* shady dealings, the ship encountered problems trading at Point Comfort because its letter of marque was no longer valid, making its attack on the *San Juan Bautista* illegal. The Africans’ enslavement by the Portuguese, and theft by privateers with valid letters of marque, were considered legal under European law, but without a valid letter of marque, the Africans on the *Treasurer* were now considered illicit goods. King

James I had made peace with the Spanish, and his government's policies worked toward improving diplomatic relations. Both English ships looked to other European heads of state for their letters of marque, and colonial and royal officials had to maintain enough distance from privateering to preserve the appearance of disapproval. *White Lion* sailed from Flushing (Vlissingen), a Dutch port well-known as a base for English privateers. Records referring to the *White Lion* as "Dutch," a "Flemish man of war," or "of Flushing" do not literally imply the ship was Dutch, but rather referenced the ship's foreign letter of marque and Flushing's popularity as privateering port. In his letter describing the attack on the *San Juan Bautista*, John Pory calls the *White Lion* a "Flemish man of war" but refers to the *Treasurer* as "an English man of war also," indicating it was commonly understood that English privateers used Flushing as a base. The *Treasurer's* letter of marque came from the Duke of Savoy, whose ambassador in London was well known to distribute letters of marque. However, by the time of the attack on the *San Juan Bautista*, the Duke of Savoy had made peace with Spain, rendering the *Treasurer's* letter of marque invalid. The *Treasurer* last left England in April 1618, and it is unclear whether Capt. Daniel Elfrith knew his letter of marque was invalid when the two ships attacked the *San Juan Bautista*. If Elfrith knew, he likely assumed he would meet a ready welcome from Argall and other friends in Virginia. Instead, with Argall ousted from power, the *Treasurer* looked elsewhere to trade.²³

In Bermuda, the Africans remained caught up in the ongoing fallout of the *Treasurer* scandal. After the ship's arrival, Deputy Governor Miles Kendall temporarily seized the ship's cargo because of concerns that it "had been taken unlawfully at sea from some of the King of Spain's subjects." This seizure may have included the Africans. Bermuda's new governor, Nathaniel Butler, arrived in October 1619. A former ship captain, he was part of Warwick's faction and friendly to privateers. Butler directed the Africans from the *Treasurer*, and others brought around the same time on a frigate by privateer Capt. Kirby, to be seized and put to work for the colony. Warwick gave two of the Africans to Butler, and others labored on the Warwick's Bermuda property. Butler wrote to Sir Nathaniel Rich, Warwick's cousin, "If it were not for the accidental negroes [those from the *Treasurer* and brought by Kirby], I were not able to raise one pound of tobacco this year for the defrayment of any public work....These slaves are the most proper and cheap instruments for this plantation that can be."²⁴

The issue of the *Treasurer's* exploits in the West Indies was reported by Sir Edwin Sandys to the Privy Council, where the Spanish ambassador lodged a complaint against the attack on *San Juan Bautista*. The Company, anxious to distance itself from any appearance of complicity in Warwick's or Argall's illicit dealings, disavowed Argall's operations and the *Treasurer's* part in the attack. An investigation ensued, and Butler attempted to keep the Africans away from investigations into the *Treasurer's* piracy to avoid potential seizure of illicitly obtained property, taking "great care of your business concerning the *Treasurer* and the negroes," noting that they were "not safe to be anywhere but under the governor's eye." Between 1618 and 1620, Warwick set about replacing white tenant farmers on his land in Bermuda with enslaved Africans so he would not have to pay the tenants their share of tobacco. In 1622, two officers on the *Treasurer* in 1619 claimed they were owed nine of the Africans as their share of the loot from the attack on the *San Juan Bautista* but that Butler had seized all of the Africans. The Bermuda Company determined that all the Africans from the *Treasurer* and Capt. Kirby's frigate belonged to Warwick, but officials in England determined that they would be divided between Miles Kendall, Warwick, and the Bermuda Company. In 1623, Bermuda's sheriff was ordered to search for the Africans brought by the *Treasurer* and Capt. Kirby to settle claims to the Africans. The outcome of the search is not recorded, and the identities and fates of the Bermuda Africans from the *San Juan Bautista* remain unknown.²⁵

Early Africans in Virginia

Though there were 32 Africans living in Virginia in 1620, by 1625 there were only around 25 Africans in the colony. We know little about their individual experiences, but surviving court and census records tell us some of their names and where they lived.

Most of the Africans in Virginia in 1625 arrived in 1619 on the *White Lion* and *Treasurer*. However, at least five Africans arrived on other ship, and two children had been born to African mothers. After 1625, very few documents reveal any details of the lives of Virginia's First Africans.

Life in Virginia: The Censuses of 1620, 1624, and 1625

Very few documents survive to tell us about the individual lives of early Africans in Virginia, and most of what we know are some of their names, locations where they lived, and demographic information recorded in three census lists taken in 1620, 1624, and 1625. In 1620, there were 32 Africans in Virginia, making up about 3% of Virginia's non-native population; by 1625, there were around 25 Africans, or about 2%.²⁶

The "20 and odd" brought on the English privateer ship *White Lion* probably numbered 29-30, and an additional 2-3 Africans arrived a few days later on the *Treasurer*. In March 1620, a census recorded 32 Africans, 17 women and 15 men, living in Virginia, all probably from the *White Lion* or *Treasurer*. None of the Africans are identified by name or location in 1620. They were described as "in the service of several planters," so they had already been sold rather than laboring for the Virginia Company.²⁷

The next census, called the "Lists of the Living and Dead," was taken in February 1624. This census records only 21 surviving Africans, at least one of whom arrived after 1619. Several Africans probably died of disease or in the 1622 Powhatan Indian assault on the English colony, but some people may have escaped or been moved or traded out of Virginia. One unnamed African died at West & Shirley Hundred in Charles City County sometime in the year before the census was taken. Of the 21 surviving Africans in the 1624 census, 12 have first names but no surname, and 9 are unnamed; 6 are women, 9 are men, and 6 do not have a sex given.²⁸

While the 1624 census gives us the names of 12 of the 21 Africans, the 1625 "Muster of the Inhabitants of Virginia" records the names of only 8 of the 23 Africans it lists. These 23 included 11 men, 10 women, and 2 children (1 male) born to African mothers. The 1625 Muster recorded the ages of almost all English colonists, along with the year of their arrival in Virginia and the ships that brought them. Three Africans – Anthony, Mary, and John Pedro – are listed arrived on English ships after 1619. John Pedro was 30 years old in 1625; he was the only African whose age was recorded.²⁹

Most of the Africans in the 1624 List and 1625 Muster were located in four major settlement areas and labored for members of the colony's powerful and wealthy elite. Not all Africans in Virginia by 1625 are listed in the 1624 and 1625 censuses; court and ship records describe the arrival of at least three additional Africans – John, John Phillip, and Brase. Additionally, the 1624 Lists of the Living and the

Dead and the 1625 Muster are estimated to have missed about 20% and 10% of Virginia's non-native population, respectively.³⁰

Africans at Elizabeth City (Hampton): Anthony, Isabella, William, and John Pedro

In 1624, Anthony and Isabella were located at Elizabeth City, on land belonging to Capt. William Tucker somewhere between the Hampton River and Point Comfort. Capt. Tucker was a burgess and military commander who may have been present when the *White Lion* or *Treasurer* were at Point Comfort. Later in 1624, the Virginia Company established an area of "Company Land" on the east side of the Southampton (Hampton) River and relocated English settlers to the west side. Anthony and Isabella moved with Tucker, and by 1625 they were located on Tucker's 150 acres on Elizabeth City's James River waterfront. By 1625, the couple also had a son, William, who was baptized. In the 1625 Muster, the family is identified as "Antoney Negro: Isabell Negro: and William theire Child Baptised." The date and location of William's baptism are not recorded, but it probably took place Elizabeth City's parish church on the eastern side of the Hampton River near today's Hampton University campus. William was one of the first two African American children born in Virginia, and he is often considered the first because the other child was not identified by name. In the early seventeenth century, the word "baptism" was used to denote the religious rite but not the giving of a name and legal status of personhood (which was included in use of the word "christening"), so William's baptism probably did not affect whether or not he was considered enslaved or free.³¹

Anthony, Isabella, and William disappear from the historical record after 1625, so details of their lives and experiences remains unknown. In 1633, Capt. William Tucker acquired 100 acres of land in Elizabeth City on the Back River, and in 1635, he patented another 200 acres on the south side of the James River. Anthony, Isabella, and William may have been moved from Tucker's original 150 acres on Elizabeth City's James River waterfront. The modern day Tucker family of Hampton and Newport News believes Anthony, Isabella, and William became or were free and took the last name Tucker, and ongoing research may reveal more about Anthony's, Isabella's, and William's lives in Virginia.³²

By 1625, John Pedro was also living in Elizabeth City, in the household of Francis West on the "Company Land" on the east side of the Hampton River. John Pedro, aged 30, arrived on the *Swan* in 1623 or 1624 and is the only African whose age was recorded in the census. The *Swan* sailed to Virginia from Massachusetts; Francis West was in Plymouth in 1623 and probably returned to Virginia on the same voyage, bringing John Pedro with him. John Pedro was free by the early 1650s. He briefly owned land in Lancaster, Virginia, before moving to Maryland. As an older man, John Pedro used "Pedro" as his surname, but historians are divided on whether it may have been considered a surname before he became free, since both Kimbundu and Portuguese include double naming practices for first names. Double naming was more common among Mbundu nobles, and John Pedro may have been from a prominent family in Kongo or the eastern areas of Ndongo more heavily influenced by Portuguese religion and culture than the rest of the kingdom. John Pedro was eventually executed in Maryland for his involvement with a Catholic dissident faction, further evidence that he may have been a practicing Catholic before being enslaved. If so, his Catholic identity may have occasioned his move to Maryland during Cromwell's rule when Virginia's colonial government expelled religious minorities.³³

Africans at Warraskoyak, Flowerdew, and Jamestown

In 1624 and 1625, the other early Africans in Virginia were living at “Warwick Squeake” (Warraskoyak, near present-day Smithfield), Flowerdew Hundred (near present-day Hopewell), and in a cluster of settlements at or near Jamestown. Some Africans lived in larger groups, while a few individuals were the only African living at a site.

Angelo, an African woman, was living in the household of William Peirce, an influential and wealthy merchant, burgess, and one of the men sent to meet the *Treasurer*. Angelo, described as arriving on the *Treasurer* in the 1625 census, is the only identified African in later records who we can definitively confirm arrived with the First Africans in 1619. (Most other early Africans probably arrived in 1619, but no documents survive to confirm the arrival date of any other individual on the *White Lion* or *Treasurer*.) In Kimbundu and Portuguese-Angolan naming practices, male and female names could be used interchangeably, so it may not have mattered to Angelo whether her name looked masculine by ending with an “o” versus a feminine “a.” Some historians have feminized and anglicized the name to the modern-sounding “Angela,” but since the name appears as “Angelo” in both censuses, it seems clear that is the name she used to identify herself.³⁴

In 1624 and 1625, an African man named Edward was living at Neck of Land near Jamestown. The property was managed by Edward Kingsmill, an influential burgess and friend of Abraham Peirse. In 1624, a man named Jeso or Jiro was living at a plantation across the James River from Jamestown, but he is not identified in the 1625 Muster.³⁵

At Warraskoyak in 1624 were Peter, Anthony, Francis, and Margrett. Anthony was probably the Anthony who arrived in 1621 or 1622 on the *James* and later became known as Anthony Johnson. Warraskoyak was owned by Edward Bennett, a wealthy but mostly absentee merchant and investor whose property was managed by his brother and nephew. By 1625, Peter, Francis, and Margrett disappeared from Warraskoyak, where in 1625, Anthony (named Antonio in the 1625 Muster) was with Mary, who arrived in 1622 or 1623 on the *Margrett and John* but was not listed in the 1624 census. Warraskoyak experienced a high death rate due to disease and conflict with the Warraskoyak Indians, and Peter, Francis, and Margrett may have been killed.³⁶

We know much more about Anthony and Mary than we do about any other early Africans in Virginia, probably because their experiences were remarkably exceptional. They were free by around 1635, and as Anthony and Mary Johnson, they became prosperous landowners on Virginia’s Eastern Shore. Since Anthony and Mary arrived in Virginia on ships sailing from England, historians can only speculate about the location of their original home and how and when they were enslaved. However, like the ordeal of the *San Juan Bautista* Africans, Anthony and Mary were probably taken through the Portuguese port of Luanda. Though they were very successful in integrating themselves with the Eastern Shore’s unusually tolerant white planter society, they also maintained their West Central African identity; their grandson named his land in Maryland “Angola.”³⁷

The largest groups of Africans were on land controlled by the two men who had purchased them from the *White Lion*: Sir George Yeardley and Abraham Peirse. In 1624, 11 Africans – Anthony, William, John, Anthony, an unnamed woman, and 6 unnamed “negors” – were located at Flowerdew Hundred, owned by Yeardley. At James City in 1624, 2 unnamed women were in Peirse’s household. Later in

1624, Yeardley completed the sale of Flowerdew Hundred to Peirse, who renamed it Peirse's Hundred. Peirse probably moved the two unnamed African women to Flowerdew, and several of the Africans at Flowerdew were apparently sold to Peirse as part of the sale, since there were 4 unnamed African men, 2 unnamed African women, and an unnamed child at Peirse's Hundred in 1625. The other Africans at Flowerdew in 1624 – 3 unnamed men and 5 unnamed women – were taken to James City with Yeardley.³⁸

In his will, written in 1627, Sir George Yeardley instructed his widow to sell his "goods, debts, servants, negars, cattle, or any other thing or things, commodities or profits to me belonging." Lady Temperance Yeardley married Francis West but died herself before completely settling Sir George Yeardley's estate. The Africans caught in Yeardley's estate may have been sold, claimed by Francis West, or claimed by the Yeardleys' children on the Eastern Shore or at Lynnhaven. Abraham Peirse also made his will in 1627. In it, he instructed his widow to dispose of his estate among his heirs, but Frances Peirse also remarried before settling her husband's estate, and apparently many or all of the Africans went to the property of her new husband, Samuel Mathews, at Denbigh.³⁹

Africans Who Arrived in Virginia after 1619

At least six Africans in Virginia by 1625 were not from the *White Lion* or *Treasurer*. At Warraskoyak, Anthony arrived in the *James* in 1621 or 1622 and Mary arrived in the *Margrett and John* in 1622 or 1623. In Elizabeth City, John Pedro arrived on the *Swan* in 1623. Other Africans appear in court and other records but not in the 1624 or 1625 censuses. John, an African servant of William Ewins/Evans, left England in 1622 and was brought to Virginia on the *James*. William Ewins/Evans was a ship captain, and John may have accompanied him on voyages, which might account for his not appearing in the 1624 or 1625 censuses. Though he would have been at least middle aged, it is also possible John was the same man as John Graweere, an African servant of William Ewins/Evans who in 1641 purchased the freedom of his son from Lt. Robert Sheppard.^e Graweere was still enslaved, for the court had to specify that "the child shall be free from the said Evans or his assigns." John Graweere was allowed by Evans to raise hogs, giving half the proceeds to Evans, and he used his profits to purchase his son's freedom.⁴⁰

John Phillip was probably a free black sailor, a "negro christened in England 12 years since," who gave testimony in November, 1624, in the General Court about the actions of an English privateer against a Spanish ship. He is probably the only African to arrive in Virginia free. He may not have stayed in Virginia for long, since he is not in the 1625 census; he probably departed on a ship a sailor rather than settling in Virginia. In early modern England, the word "christening" or "christened" included the religious rite of baptism but also the conferment of a legal name and personhood. When John Phillip asserted in court that he had been christened, he was offering proof of his legal status as a free man.⁴¹

^e Some genealogists have concluded Margaret Cornish, who was enslaved to Robert Shepherd, was the mother of John Graweere's son. Margaret Cornish may be the unnamed "negro woman servant" who bore the child of white settler Robert Sweet/Sweat around 1640, and their case appears just above Graweere's in McIlwaine's *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*. However, there is no evidence that Margaret Cornish was the mother of Graweere's son, since Robert Shepherd enslaved several people. Some genealogists have also suggested Margaret Cornish was the woman "Margrett, negro" at Warraskoyak in 1624, but this is not probable, since the Margrett at Warraskoyak was an adult in 1624 and would have been unlikely to have a child in 1640. Margaret Cornish was free by 1666, when she served as witness for an indenture in Surry County.

Another African man was brought to Virginia aboard a frigate taken by privateer Captain Jones. According to testimony to Virginia's General Court in July 1625, sometime around March of that year, the Flushing privateer *Black Bess* met with a small Spanish ship off the coast of Cuba and took "a negro and a Frenchman who came away with them willingly, and a Portugall [Portuguese man] to be their Pilot out of the West Indies." Capt. Jones and some of the *Black Bess's* crew split off from Capt. Jones in a frigate and arrived at Jamestown on 11 July 1625. The General Court ordered that the crew, including the Frenchman, be sent to "such places in the Colony as they shall think fit," and ruled that Capt. Francis West could purchase the ship from its captain for 1,200 pounds of tobacco. The Spanish/Portuguese pilot was ordered to go to the Neck of Land near Jamestown to "abide until further order." The fate of the African man was not determined in July, and he was apparently laboring for Capt. William Bass pending a sale of Brase by Capt. Jones. On 12 September, the court ordered that "Capt. Bass shall deliver some clothes to the Portugall [the Portuguese pilot also brought by Capt. Jones] out of Capt. Jones his chest of clothes for his present use which is to be satisfied out of the negro's labor." The court then immediately ruled that "the negro that came with Capt. Jones shall remain with the Lady Yeardley till further order be taken for him and that he shall be allowed by the Lady Yeardley monthly for his labor forty pound weight of good merchantable tobacco for his labor and service so long as he remaineth with her." However, on 3 October, the court "ordered that the negro called by the name of Brase shall belong to Sir Francis Wyatt, Governor &c., as his servant, notwithstanding any sale by Capt. Jones to Capt. Bass, or any other challenge by the ship's company, and that neither Capt. Bass shall be liable to his bill to Capt. Jones, nor Capt. Jones, to his covenant of making good the sale to Capt. Bass." Apparently, Capt. Jones planned to sell Brase to William Bass, but the Court intervened to cancel the sale and assign ownership of Brase to Governor Francis Wyatt instead. Wyatt sat on the court making the judgment.⁴²

The circumstances of Brase's case are mysterious, and it is difficult to determine his experiences and level of freedom from the court's records. Did the court interrupt Brase's sale by Capt. Jones to William Bass and order Brase to be paid forty pounds of tobacco for his own labor with Lady Yeardley, then three weeks later rule that Brase should be the property of Governor Francis Wyatt? The court's seemingly radical alteration in Brase's life requires close examination of the circumstances of the case. Since the court ordered that Capt. Bass be reimbursed for the value of clothes from the African man's labor, Brase was working unpaid for Capt. Bass's benefit and not his own. When the court ordered the African to go to Lady Yeardley, did the court mean that Capt. Jones should be paid the forty pounds of tobacco, not Brase? Was Brase initially considered a free man because he "came away with them willingly" from the West Indies, only to have his freedom stripped by the Court and Governor Francis Wyatt? Did the Court initially view Brase as free, but Capt. Jones asserted that Brase was his property instead? Were Brase and "the negro that came with Capt. Jones" not the same man? Brase's voice is not recorded in the General Court proceedings, either in giving testimony on the voyage of the *Black Bess* or in determining his ultimate fate.⁴³

Were Virginia's First Africans Enslaved or Indentured?

Surviving records do not reveal the exact status of most African individuals brought to early colonial Virginia. However, legal, cultural, and Atlantic evidence points to most Africans being treated as enslaved beginning in 1619. They were clearly not indentured servants. A small but significant number of early Africans were able to become free after a long term of service. A very small number arrived in Virginia as free people.

Virginia's First Africans were enslaved by the Portuguese and traded in Virginia as commodities. English mariners and colonists were already familiar with the practice of slavery, and they emulated Spanish and Portuguese models of treating Africans as enslaved and profiting from enslaved labor. In spite of this, some early Africans may have had more opportunity to become free than was possible as racial lines hardened after the 1660s.

Virginia's First Africans in Atlantic Context

There is no "smoking gun" for enslavement in early Virginia records. However, there is overwhelming evidence from early Virginia court records, censuses, and wills, as well as from other English Atlantic colonies. Historian Alden T. Vaughan summarized it best: "The evidence from Virginia and elsewhere refutes the popular myth that slavery was rare or nonexistent before the legislation of the 1660s and 1670s, that free blacks were numerous, and that most blacks were indentured servants. The surviving records support a very different distribution: slavery from the outset for the vast majority, freedom for some (by a variety of means), and temporary servitude (rarely with a legal indenture) for the smallest number." Agreement among scholars began to coalesce around this conclusion in the 1960s, and this has been the dominant scholarly consensus since around 1990.⁴⁴

By 1619, slavery was a familiar institution in England, English colonies, and throughout the English Atlantic. Enslaved Africans were present in England, and Africans' status as commodities was understood when they arrived in Bermuda and Virginia. English mariners had long been involved in the slave trade as pirates preying on Spanish or Portuguese ships and colonies. In 1562, pirate John Hawkins was the first Englishman to complete the "triangle trade" and transport captives from Africa to the Americas for sale. Along with Hawkins, Sir Francis Drake often stole and traded enslaved Africans. In the 1610s, English ships regularly traded captives raided or bought from Africa or Spanish settlements in America. Enslaved captives were one of the most common forms of loot for the Earl of Warwick's fleet of privateers, including *Treasurer*. Warwick was also a founding investor of the slave-trading Guinea Company (1618). When Africans arrived in English colonies, English colonists and mariners adopted Spanish and Portuguese assumptions about race and slavery that they had already been familiar with for generations. In Bermuda, the ill-fated colony at Providence Island in the Caribbean, Barbados, and other English colonies in the 17th century Atlantic, Africans' arrival seems to have instantly coincided with the assumption they would be enslaved. There was no reason to believe Virginia was an exception to this pattern. In Bermuda, where Africans were enslaved beginning in 1616, intimate trade, political, and family ties with Virginia ensured that cultural and legal attitudes toward enslaved Africans would be shared. Bermuda's governor in 1616, Capt. Daniel Tucker, was the

brother of William Tucker of Elizabeth City; Tucker sent privateers to the West Indies specifically to acquire enslaved Africans, and on the official orders of the Somers Islands (Bermuda) Company. The enslaved Africans from the *San Juan Bautista*, taken to Bermuda on the *Treasurer* by Daniel Elfrith, are clearly described as “slaves” in Bermuda records.⁴⁵

Slavery and Indentured Servitude

No evidence supports the myth that Africans were ever regarded or treated as indentured servants. They were captured in wars or raids and did not negotiate an indenture contract, unlike white servants whose practice of indenture is well documented. Indentures were a form of legal contract, evolved from the feudal system of the Middle Ages, in which an apprentice or servant was bound to a master for a set number of years. While under indenture, servants lacked some personal freedoms but still had legal protections. Indenture contracts could be bought and sold. In Virginia, indentures were a key component of migration; laborers bound themselves to landowners in return for their passage. Most laborers entered into indentures with merchants, ship captains, or planters’ agents before boarding ships in England, then their indentures were sold to planters when they arrived in Virginia.⁴⁶

A small number of early white servants arrived from England without contracts and negotiated indentures with planters once in Virginia. In 1619, before the African landing, the first General Assembly passed legislation requiring the registration of all indentures, to prevent uncontracted servants taking advantage of the widely circulated English Common Law dictum of a one year period of service for servants without a formal indenture contract. All records from Virginia indicate that Africans served far longer than their white indentured counterparts, so it is clear they were not treated as uncontracted indentured servants when they arrived. Moreover, there is no evidence Africans were included in the mandated registration of indentures. In 1643, the Assembly passed legislation setting standard terms of service for as-yet-unindentured servants based on age; this law suggests it never applied to Africans beforehand and clearly did not apply to Africans at the time, since no documents recorded Africans’ ages as they did for white servants. A very small number of Africans were known to come from England; some of this group may have been able to negotiate regular indentures, and this small group probably accounts for a disproportionate number of free blacks in early Virginia.⁴⁷

Some Africans attempted to sue for freedom by claiming they were indentured servants. However, they usually could not prove their claim. Seven examples survive in Virginia records of cases brought by Africans or African Americans claiming they had served finite terms of service, as under an indenture, but their masters claimed they were bound for life. Perhaps the most famous of these suites was brought by a black servant of Anthony Johnson, John Casor, who in 1655 testified that he was due his freedom after completing an indenture of seven or eight years. However, the court ruled in favor of Johnson, probably because Casor could not produce a valid indenture contract or evidence an indenture was recorded by the colonial government when he arrived in Virginia. Of these seven freedom suits, six were unsuccessful, indicating the courts overwhelmingly viewed Africans and African Americans as enslaved for life rather than for specific terms of indentures. The seventh freedom suit was brought by Elizabeth Key, whose case is discussed in detail below.⁴⁸

Some proponents of the “indentured servant” theory of Africans’ status emphasize the use of “negro” as a signifier of nationality, akin to “Irishman” or other labels found in some very early Virginia records. However, these European nationality labels all but disappear from the historical record in the 1620s,

whereas they persisted for Africans. Moreover, there are no examples of ethnic labels applying to children of whites, whereas Africans and their African American descendants were labeled for generations as “negro.” In the 1624 census and 1625 muster, many Africans are not identified by any name. Of those with first names, only one has a surname. Rather, Africans are identified as “negro.” By the late 16th century, as English participation in the Atlantic slave trade grew, the words “negro” and “slave” were used interchangeably. 17th century English missionary Morgan Godwyn observed, “These two words, Negro and Slave, being by custom grown homogenous and convertible; even as Negro and Christian, Englishman and Heathen, are by the like corrupt custom and partiality made opposites; thereby as it were implying, that the one could not be Christians, nor the other Infidels.”⁴⁹

Slavery and Christianity

Until later in the 17th century, “Christian” had an ethnic, cultural, and racial definition rather than referring to someone’s religious identity or beliefs. Non-European culture, along with skin color, set Africans apart. From the 16th century until the early 20th century, English/British colonizers tended to consider non-whites not following Euro-centric cultural norms as “heathen,” regardless of whether they practiced Christianity as a religion. “Christian” meant someone from somewhere within Christendom (Europe). For example, the 1620 Virginia census identified Africans as “Others not Christians in the Service of the English.” In 1630, a white settler was whipped for “mixing his Christian body with a heathen one” by fornicating with a “Negro.” In 1662, a Virginia law prohibiting interracial sexual relationships fined “any Christian commit fornication with a negro man or woman.”⁵⁰

Africans’ baptism or conversion to Christianity did not seem to alter their status in English colonies. Two Virginia legal suits illuminate this problem further. In 1656, Elizabeth Key sued for her freedom, arguing that she had been baptized, she had been bound for a finite term rather than for life, and her father was a free white man (under English common law, children took the status of their father; a 1662 Virginia law confirmed children would take the status of their mother). A local jury decided in Key’s favor, but an appeal to the General Court ruled Key was enslaved. A further appeal to the General Assembly went unresolved, and the case was slated for retrial but ended when the overseers of Key’s enslaver apparently dropped their argument. In 1667, an enslaved man named Fernando sued for his freedom on the grounds that “he was a Christian and had been several years in England” and even had written documentation in Portuguese of his baptism. However, his suit was dismissed. Later in 1667, the General Assembly clarified that “conferring of baptism doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom.” The act explained that “some doubts have risen whether children that are slaves by birth...should by virtue of their baptism be made free,” indicating that some others in Virginia possibly wrestled with the same question, but there is no evidence of freedom for any baptized captives anytime between 1619 and 1667. In neither Key’s nor Fernando’s case did evidence of baptism or Christian conversion provide enough support for a successful claim to freedom. The 1667 law was enacted five years after Key’s suit in 1662, indicating the General Assembly did not view baptism of enslaved people as a significant threat at the time. Most significant is that both enslaved individuals were held in bondage by their enslavers despite strong, public evidence of their baptism, revealing that the overwhelming attitude among English colonizers in Virginia was that Christianity did not alter the status of enslaved people.⁵¹

Slavery and the Law

Between the 1640s and 1705, Virginia's legal codes gradually constructed the rigid system of slavery in place in the 18th and 19th centuries. These laws did not anticipate the existence of slavery; rather, they eliminated potential "loop holes" and reinforced a system already deeply embedded in Virginia's culture and economy. No law prohibited English colonists from adopting Spanish or Portuguese models of slavery as soon as Africans were brought to Virginia; the English were "free to enslave." As with most aspects of English Common Law, the absence of written codes does not indicate the absence of a practical or legal reality. Slavery was legal in custom and in fact long before Virginia's Slave Codes were formally codified. Court records indicate slavery was the norm from at least the late 1620s. After 1619, Virginia's courts imposed customary law, creating legal precedents that reflected common assumptions and practices. For example, the General Court created customary law, and reflected the reality of the practice of slavery already in effect, in assigning Brase to the ownership of Governor Francis Wyatt in 1625. In the 1660s, the General Court's denial of Elizabeth Key's freedom suit indicated that, by custom, it was legal and commonplace to enslave baptized Christians, and that children inherited the status of their enslaved mothers, long before laws were legislated.⁵²

Surviving wills and other personal records also indicate a widespread assumption that slavery was legal and would be enforced by the law. These documents added to a growing body of common law and customary law precedents that reinforced the legality of slavery over time. Many wills, such as George Yeardley's (1627), listed Africans separately from (white) "servants," indicating Africans did not have the same status as white indentured laborers. In wills and other legal records in early Virginia and throughout other English colonies, African laborers are consistently listed with valuations much higher than white servants, indicating a likely expectation of lifetime service. Over half of surviving wills and deeds conveying enslaved women also convey rights to those enslaved women's children, before passage of the 1662 law making enslavement a heritable condition based on the status of the mother. Similarly, one third of enslaved African Americans listed in estate inventories before 1662 were children listed with higher values than white indentured servants and without listing years remaining in terms of service, indicating the widespread assumption that slavery was heritable and perpetual.⁵³

Free Early Africans in Virginia

Other than John Phillip, there is no evidence any Africans in Virginia by 1625 arrived as free people. However, at least three early Africans in Virginia became free after a long period of enslavement. Many free Africans probably purchased their own freedom by breeding and selling their own livestock. Antonio, later Anthony Johnson, arrived on the *James* in 1621, and his wife Mary (Johnson) arrived in 1622 on the *Margrett and John*. They were free by 1635 and already had a large herd of livestock by the time they acquired land on Virginia's Eastern Shore, which had a free black population much larger than Virginia's mainland counties. John Pedro arrived on the *Swan* and was free by the early 1650s. He briefly owned land in Lancaster before moving to Maryland. Significantly, the Africans who became free were those who arrived on English ships after 1619, rather than on the *San Juan Bautista*. Africans who had already spent time in England or on English ships perhaps had more familiarity with English language, culture, and legal systems that allowed them to do business and negotiate with English colonists. Because of their status, free Africans appear disproportionately in the historical record, whereas the lives and stories of most enslaved Africans are hidden or lost. The experiences of these freed Africans were exceptional, not typical of the vast majority of Africans brought to early Virginia.⁵⁴

Conclusion: Legacy, and Other First Africans

The Africans brought to Virginia in 1619 were the first recorded Africans in mainland English North America. Over the seventeenth century, enslaved Africans replaced European laborers in Virginia and other English colonies. To uphold the system of slavery, enslavers developed legal, racial, and economic structures that maintained profit and inequality, with far-reaching impact on local, Virginia, and American history.

The thirty-two Africans brought to Virginia in 1619 were not the “First Africans in America.” Africans had been present in America for at least a century. However, their landing in Virginia was momentous, for it marked the seeds of the United States’ present-day African American population and their profound contributions to our nation’s culture, industry, labor, and economy over four hundred years.

Other First Africans Include:

- Several theories posit that America may have been “discovered” by Africans before the arrival of Europeans. Some Arab sources and oral accounts from Caribbean natives suggest that North Africans may have voyaged to America in the medieval period. Additionally, over the 20th century some anthropologists theorized that Africans may have crossed the Atlantic and influenced the ancient Olmec culture of central Mexico. Although there is no genetic or archaeological evidence to support this theory, the most compelling support comes from masks and sculptures of heads that seem to show African features. However, this theory is not widely accepted among scholars.⁵⁵
- Free (and possibly enslaved) Africans almost certainly made up part of the crews of Spanish Conquistador ships, including Columbus’ 1492 expedition.⁵⁶
- Spanish conquistadors first imported enslaved Africans to Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and Dominican Republic) in 1502. Spanish conquest depended on enslavement of native peoples, but forced labor, cultural and environmental disruption, and waves of devastating epidemics caused native populations to collapse. Within two decades, the Spanish relied on Africans to replace native enslaved labor.⁵⁷
- The first documented Africans in the present-day United States were part of a Spanish expedition to present-day South Carolina in 1526. There, the Africans staged a rebellion, and the Spanish abandoned the settlement. The Spanish brought enslaved Africans to St. Augustine (Florida) in 1565.⁵⁸
- Enslaved Africans may have been left at Roanoke Island (present-day North Carolina) by Sir Francis Drake. In 1586, Drake led an English fleet in pillaging Cartagena and other colonial Spanish settlements. Drake stole at least 200 enslaved Africans as part of his loot. Drake’s fleet then sailed to St. Augustine and onto the Roanoke colony. Three Africans left behind at St. Augustine reported that Drake intended to leave the remaining Africans at Roanoke to labor for the benefit of the colony there. However, surviving records do not confirm whether this plan was carried out.⁵⁹
- Mathieu Da Coste, an interpreter, traveled to New France with Samuel Champlain in 1605.⁶⁰
- African sailors served on Dutch crews involved in founding New Netherland. One Afro-Caribbean man, Juan Rodriguez, may have been the first non-native settler of Manhattan from 1613 to 1614.⁶¹
- Enslaved Africans were imported to Bermuda in 1616.
- The landing of the “20 and odd” Africans in Virginia in 1619 is the most significant beginning for African Americans who lived enslaved between 1619 and 1865, as well as today’s African American population.
- John Pedro may have been the first African in New England in 1623.

Timeline: 1618 to 1625

1618-1620	Portuguese and allied Imbangala warriors invade and conquer Ndongo; thousands are enslaved.
Late 1618 or Early 1619	The <i>San Juan Bautista</i> leaves Luanda, Angola, carrying 350 enslaved Africans, and bound for Vera Cruz, Mexico. Approximately 150 Africans die during the voyage.
Spring/Summer 1619	Captain Manuel Méndez de Acuña orders the <i>San Juan Bautista</i> to stop in Jamaica to “refresh.” There, he trades 24 enslaved children in return for supplies.
July 1619	English privateers <i>White Lion</i> and <i>Treasurer</i> attack the <i>San Juan Bautista</i> in the Bay of Campeche. They steal approximately 60 of the remaining enslaved Africans.
Late August, 1619	<i>White Lion</i> arrives at Point Comfort and trades around 30 Africans for supplies.
Late August? (a few days later), 1619	<i>Treasurer</i> arrives at Point Comfort with additional enslaved Africans. The ship illicitly trades 2-3 of the captives, including Angelo, before sailing for Bermuda.
30 August, 1619	The frigate <i>Santa Ana</i> arrives in Vera Cruz with the remaining 147 captives from the <i>San Juan Bautista</i> .
Late September or early October, 1619	<i>White Lion</i> leaves Virginia to return to Flushing.
March, 1620	A census lists 32 Africans in Virginia, 17 female and 15 male.
1621 (1622?)	Anthony (Johnson) arrives on the <i>James</i> .
1622 (1623?)	Mary (Johnson) arrives on the <i>Margrett and John</i> .
July, 1622	John departs England for Virginia on the <i>James</i> .
1623 (1624?)	John Pedro arrives on the <i>Swan</i> .
February, 1624	A census records 22 Africans in Virginia, including Anthony and Isabella at Elizabeth City, and Angelo at Jamestown.
November, 1624	John Phillip testifies in Virginia’s General Court.
1624 or January 1625	Anthony and Isabella’s son, William, is born and baptized. A second unidentified African child is also born at Flowerdew Hundred.
January and February, 1625	A muster records 23 Africans living Virginia. This muster is the first record of William’s birth and baptism, as well as Angelo’s arrival on the <i>Treasurer</i> in 1619.
July, 1625	An African man, probably Brase, arrives from the Caribbean with privateers.
October, 1625	Brase is given to Governor Francis Wyatt by Virginia’s General Court.

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(N.B. Spellings have been modernized, but no word changes have been made.)

Excerpt from letter of John Rolfe to Sir Edwin Sandys, January 1620 (old calendar 1619). *Ferrar Papers, Document 151. Transcribed version available in Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., Records of the Virginia Company Vol. 3, pp. 241-248.*

About the latter end of August, a Dutch man of war of the burden of 160 tons arrived at Point Comfort, the commander's name Capt. Jope, his pilot for the West Indies one Mr. Marmaduke an Englishman. They met with the *Treasurer* in the West Indies, and determined to hold consort ship hitherward, but in their passage lost one the other. He brought not anything but 20. and odd Negroes, which the Governor [Sir George Yeardley] and Cape Merchant [Abraham Peirse] bought for victuals (whereof he was in great need as he pretended) at the best and easiest rates they could. He had a large and ample Commission from his Excellency to range and to take purchase in the West Indies.

Three or 4. days after the *Treasurer* arrived. At his arrival he sent word presently to the Governor to know his pleasure, who wrote to him, and did request myself and Lieutenant Peace and Mr. Ewins to go down to him, to desire him to come up to James City. But before we got down he had set sail and was gone out of the Bay. The occasion thereof happened by the unfriendly dealing of the inhabitants of Kecoughtan, for he was in great want of victuals, wherewith they would not relieve him nor his Company upon any terms.

Excerpt from John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, & the Summer Isles, 1624*

About the last of August [1619] came in a Dutch man of war that sold us twenty Negars.

[John Smith likely copied this information from Rolfe's letter, above, misquoting "Negars," since the original manuscript of Rolfe's letter clearly says "Negroes."]

Excerpt from letter of John Pory to Sir Dudley Carleton, 30 September 1619, written at Jamestown. *From Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., Records of the Virginia Company Vol. 3, pp. 219-222.*

The occasion of this ship's [*White Lion's*] coming hither was an accidental consortship in the West Indies with the *Treasurer*, an English man of war also, licensed by a commission from the Duke of Savoy to take Spaniards as lawful prize. This ship, the *Treasurer*, went out of England in April was [last?] twelvemonth, about a month, I think, before any peace was concluded between the King of Spain and that prince. Hither she came to Captain Argall, then governor of this Colony, being part owner of her. He more for love of gain, the root of all evil, than for any true love he bore to this Plantation, victualled and manned her anew, and sent her with the same commission to range the Indies. The event thereof (we may misdoubt) will prove some attempt of the Spaniard upon us, either by way of revenge, or by way of prevention; lest we might in time make this place *sedem belli* against the West Indies....

...This packet I delivered to one Marmaduke Rayner, an Englishman, who goes entertained as Pilot in this Flemish man of war [*White Lion*]. If he come to your lordship, as he hath promised, he will be the fittest messenger....

Accounts of the privateer attack on the *San Juan Bautista*. *Archivo General de Indias [or AGI; Seville], quoted in Engel Sluiter, "New Light on the '20. and Odd."*

Enter on the credit side the receipt of 8,657.875 pesos paid by Manuel Mendes de Acunha, master of the ship *San Juan Bautista*, on 147 slave pieces brought by him to the said port on August 30, 1619, aboard the frigate *Santa Ana*, master Rodrigo Escobar. On the voyage inbound, Mendes de Acunha was robbed at sea off the coast of Campeche by English corsairs [privateers]. Out of 350 slaves, large and small, he loaded in said Loanda (200 under license issued to him in Sevilla and the rest to be declared later) the English corsairs left him with only 147, including 24 slave boys [or children] he was forced to sell in Jamaica, where he had to refresh, for he had many sick aboard, and many had already died. (*AGI, Contaduría 883*)

[*San Juan Bautista* was] robbed by corsairs on the coast of Campeche, and from there the civil authorities transported them [the 147, to Vera Cruz] on the frigate, master Roderigo Descobar, who entered the said port on August 30, 1619. (*AGI, Indiferente General 2795*)

Virginia Muster, March-May 1620. *Ferrar Papers, Document 159.*⁶²

The Sums total of all the Persons, Cattle, Corn, Arms, Houses, and Boats Contained in the general Muster of Virginia taken in the beginning of March 1619[1620]

The number of all the Persons men women and children English and other Christians in Virginia

Able men	670
Women	119
Boys serviceable	039
Younger Children	057
[Total]	885

Others not Christians in the Service of the English

Indians in the service of several planters	04
Negros in the service of several planters	32
Negro men	15
Negro women	17

[Total population] 921

Passengers Sent in the James for Virginia the last of July 1622. *Ferrar Papers, Document 400.*

John the negro – for m' Wm Ewins

Testimony of John Phillip, General Court, November 1624. *H.R. McIlwaine, ed., Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia: 1622-1632, 1670-1676 (Richmond, Va.: The Colonial Press, 1924), 33.*

A Court held the last day of November 1624

John Phillip A negro christened in England 12 years since, sworn & examined sayeth, that being in a ship with Sir Henry Maneringe, they took a Spanish ship about Cape St. Mary, and carried her to Mamora [Antigua] in which ship was a Spanish lady and divers other, and being in Mamora Mr. Symon Tuckinge came into Mamora

in a small ship, and after some conference had by the said Tuckinge with the Spaniards taken as afroresaid, he was by them employed in the said small ship to Lisbon to fetch money for the ransoming of the said lady, which accordingly he performed.

Brase's Case. *McIlwaine, ed.*, Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia, 66-73.

A Court held the 11th of July 1625

William Barnes, born in in Fawley in the County of South[ampton?], sworn and examined sayeth, that Capt. John Powell shipped him at the Isle of Wight in the good ship called the *Black Bess* of Flushing of the burthen of one hundred tons [with Capt. Jones in the West Indies].... With them they left the frigate which they had first taken and their own and took a negro and a Frenchman who came away with them willingly, and a Portugall to be their pilot out of the West Indies.... [See the following for a similar, complete account.]

Andrew Roe of Holt in Norfolk sworn and examined sayeth that he was ship in Flushing by Capt. Powell and Capt. Jones in the *Black Bess*, and having victualed at the Isle of Wight they put out to sea and went first to the Western Island, and from thence to the West Indies, where they lighted upon a frigate, but he this examined was not aboard the shallop that took her. So they manned the frigate and took her along with them, and after because Capt. Powell would not allow them sufficient water and victuals and required them to set their hands to certain articles, the company grew discontented, and so Capt. Powell bid them that would go for their country to take the frigate and go with her, whereupon they chose Capt. Jones for their Captain and Master and parted from him, intending to go immediately for their country, but their provisions and water being spent, they were forced to put in for relief, and having got some provisions they could not find the way out of the Islands, the captain being unacquainted with those parts, and after being up and down they lighted upon a frigate where they found 60 turtles and some tobacco and meal and other small mater, and taking her with them, afterwards lighted upon a Spanish frigate which came under their lee, and they gave them their first frigate, taking out of her some raw hides and some tobacco and a negro and a Frenchman who were desirous to go along with them, and a Portugall [Portuguese man] to be their pilot out of the Islands, intending to set him ashore upon Cape Florida or thereabouts and after they got some fresh water and provisions ashore, they left two of their company ashore, and the weather growing foul they lost two cables and anchors and their boat sunk at the ship's stern, by means whereof they could not go for their men but were driven out to sea. And after had no opportunities to set the Portugall ashore but came directly to Virginia, where they arrived on Monday the eleventh of July 1625.

A Court held the 12th of September 1625

It is ordered that Capt. Bass shall deliver some clothes to the Portugall [the Portuguese pilot] out of Capt. Jones his chest of clothes for his present use which is to be satisfied out of the negro's labor.

It is ordered that the negro that came with Capt. Jones shall remain with Lady Yeardley till further order be taken for him and that he shall be allowed by the Lady Yeardley monthly for his labor forty pound weight of good merchantable tobacco for his labor and service so long as he remaineth with her.

A Court held the third day of October 1625

It is ordered the negro called by the name **Brase** shall belong to Sir Francis Wyatt Governor &c., as his servant, notwithstanding any sale by Capt. Jones to Capt. Bass, or any other challenge by the ships company, and that neither Capt. Bass shall be liable to his bill to Capt. Jones, nor Capt. Jones, to his covenant of making good the sale to Capt. Bass.

A List of the Names of the Living in Virginia⁶³

February the 16th 1623[1624]

At Flowerdieu [Flowerdew] Hundred

--- Negors
--- Negors
--- VI Negors
--- Negors
--- Negors
--- Negors

Anthony
William
John
Anthony } Negors men
an Negors woman

At James Cittye and with the Corporation thereof

--- Negro } women
--- Negro }
Angelo a Negar

The Neck of Land

Edward a Negro

At the Plantation over against James Cittie

Jeso [or Jiro] a Negro

At Warwick Squeake [Warraskoyak]

Peter
Anthony
Franc's
Margrett } negres

More at Elizabeth Cittie

Anthony
Isabella } Negres

A List of the Names of the Dead in Virginia

Since April Last, February 16 1623[1624]

At West and Sherlow Hundred

one Negar

Musters of the Inhabitants of Virginia 1624[1625]⁶⁴

The Muster of the Inhabitants of Peirseys Hundred taken the 20th of January 1624[1625]

The Muster of m' Abraham Peirseys Servants

Negro }
Negro } 4 Men
Negro }
Negro }
Negro Woman
Negro Woman and a young Child of hers

The Muster of the Inhabitants of James Cittie taken the 24th of January 1624[1625]

The Muster of Sir George Yeardley Kt &ct.

Negro Men. 3
Negro Women. 5

The Muster of Capt. William Pierce

Angelo a Negro Woman in the *Treasurer*

The Muster of the Inhabitants of the Neck-of-Land neare James Cittie taken Febr the 4th 1624[1625]

[Household of Richard Kingsmell]

Edward a Negro

The Muster of the Inhabitants at Wariscoyack taken the 7th of Febr 1624[1625]

The Muster of m' Edward Bennett's servants

Antonio a Negro in the *James* 1621
Mary a Negro Woman in the *Margrett & John* 1622

[Elizabeth City]

Capt William Tucker his Muster

Antoney Negro: **Isabell** Negro: and **William** their Child Baptised

A Muster of the Inhabitants of Elizabeth Cittie beyond Hampton River Being the Companyes Land

Capt. Francis West his Muster

John Pedro a Neger aged 30 in the *Swan* 1623

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- ²⁷ 1620 "General Muster."
- ²⁸ 1623/24 "Lists of the Living and the Dead."
- ²⁹ 1624/25 "General Musters."
- ³⁰ 1623/24 "Lists of the Living and the Dead"; 1624/25 "General Musters"; Morgan, "First American Boom," 170-171 n4; Hecht, 69, 77.
- ³¹ 1623/24 "Lists of the Living and the Dead"; 1624/25 "General Musters"; McCartney, *Virginia Immigrants*, 43-46, 103-704; Sarah Lawrence, "Christening and the Giving of a Name in Baptism: Some Linguistic Reflections," *Practical Theology* 9, no. 1 (2016), 46-47, 51-54.
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- ³⁵ 1623/24 "Lists of the Living and the Dead"; 1624/25 "General Musters"; McCartney, *Virginia Immigrants*, 446-447. Jeso is transcribed as "Jiro" in Hotten and "John" in *Colonial Records of Virginia*. An examination of the original manuscript shows that it is certainly not "John," and other instances of the name John are spelled out rather than "Jno." "Jiro" is a possible transcription, but it looks much more like "Jeso."
- ³⁶ 1623/24 "Lists of the Living and the Dead"; 1624/25 "General Musters"; McCartney, *Virginia Immigrants*, 50-51, 125-126; McCartney, "New Light," 23-25; James H. Brewer, "Negro Property Owners in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (1955), 576-579. For discussion of inconsistencies in ship arrival dates recorded in the 1624/25 Muster, and estimates of more accurate dates, see Avery E. Kolb, "Early Passenger Arrivals to Virginia: When Did They Really Arrive?," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* *8, no. 4 (1980): 401-414.
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⁴² Mcllwaine, *Minutes of the Council and General Court*, 66-73; Morgan, "First American Boom," 194-195.

⁴³ Mcllwaine, *Minutes of the Council and General Court*, 66-73. Vaughan, "First Decade," 470-471; McColley, "Slavery in Virginia," 15-16.

⁴⁴ Vaughan, "Origins Debate," 341; Thomas D. Morris, "'Villeinage... as It Existed in England, Reflects but Little Light on Our Subject': The Problem of the 'Sources' of Southern Slave Law," *The American Journal of Legal History* 32, no. 2 (1988), 104; Morgan, "Virginia Slavery in Atlantic Context," 86-87; April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 137-139; Goetz, "Rethinking the 'Unthinking Decision'," 612; McColley, "Slavery in Virginia," 11-12, 23; Sweet, "African Identity," 225-227, 246-247; Heywood & Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 299; Philip D. Morgan, "Virginia's Other Prototype: The Caribbean," in *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 377-378; Coombs, "Beyond the 'Origins Debate'," 254; James Horn, *1619: Jamestown and the Forging of American Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 2018); 103-112; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 146-147; Anthony S. Parent, *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 43; Lorena S. Walsh, *Motive of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 116-117; Halliday, "Brase's Case," 254-255; Edmund S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," in *Virginia Reconsidered: New Histories of the Old Dominion*, Kevin R. Hardwick and Warren R. Hofstra, eds. (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 58-59; Michael Guasco, *Slaves and Englishmen: Human Bondage in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 197-200; Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches & Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 109; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 29, 38-40.

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⁴⁶ Warren M. Billings, "The Law of Servants and Slaves in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 99, no. 1 (1991), 45-49; Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 109-112; Misha Ewen, "'Poore Soules': Migration, Labor, and Visions for Commonwealth," in *Virginia 1619: Slavery and Freedom in the Making of English America*, eds. Paul Musselwhite, Peter C. Mancall, and James Horn (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 134-149; Vaughan, "Origins Debate," 339-341.

⁴⁷ Billings, "Law of Servants and Slaves," 45-62; Ewen, "Poore Soules," 134-149. The exception to the recording of Africans' ages was John Pedro, who was 30 years old according to the 1625 Muster.

⁴⁸ Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 320; Breen and Innes, *Myne Owne Ground*, 92-93; Vaughan, "Origins Debate," 340 n86; Coombs, "Beyond the 'Origins Debate'," 257-258.

⁴⁹ James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997), 143-145, 150-155; Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 312-318; Guasco, *Slaves and Englishmen*, 171-187; Jordan, *White Over Black*, 97; Vaughan, "Origins Debate," 325, 341-342; McColley, "Slavery in Virginia," 12; Halliday, "Brase's Case," 253.

⁵⁰ Jordan, *White Over Black*, 73-75, 93-96; Vaughan, "The Origins Debate," 325-326; Rebecca Anne Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 73-74; Morris, "Villeinage," 101-102; 1620 "General Muster," Ferrar Papers 159.

⁵¹ Coombs, "Beyond the 'Origins Debate'," 260-262; Warren M. Billings, "The Cases of Fernando and Elizabeth Key: A Note on the Status of Blacks in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1973), 467-474.

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- ⁵⁷ Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 90-102; Restall, "Black Conquistadors," 176.
- ⁵⁸ Douglas T. Peck, "Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón's Doomed Colony of San Miguel de Gualdape," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (2001), 189, 194; Jane Landers, "Black Frontier Settlements in Spanish Colonial Florida," *OAH Magazine of History* 3, no. 2 (1988), 28; Restall, "Black Conquistadors," 182-183.
- ⁵⁹ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Roanoke: The Abandoned Colony*, 2nd ed. (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 87, 91-92; David B. Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1990), 197-204.
- ⁶⁰ Heather Macleod-Leslie, "Archaeology and Atlantic Canada's African Diaspora," *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* 43, no. 1 (2014), 141.
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- ⁶² Ferrar Papers 159. Transcribed in McCartney, "An Early Virginia Census," 179.
- ⁶³ Public Record Office, National Archives (United Kingdom), CO 1/3. Transcribed in *Colonial Records of Virginia*, 37-60, and in Hotten, *The Original Lists of Persons of Quality*, 169-196. See also Colonial Records Project, Survey Report 0624.
- ⁶⁴ Public Record Office, National Archives (United Kingdom), CO 1/3. Transcribed in Hotten, *The Original Lists of Persons of Quality*, 201-265. See also Colonial Records Project, Survey Report 0624.